



Grand-Duché de Luxembourg  
**ATHÉNÉE DE Luxembourg**

24, Bd Pierre Dupong  
L-1430 LUXEMBOURG



## **Language policy – Athénée de Luxembourg**

### **Context, particularities, challenges**

Luxembourg is in a particular situation as the nation has three official languages (Luxembourgish, French, German) and much documentation is also issued in English and Portuguese due to the large immigrant population. The school's language policy is based on the language policy of our country, which offers bi- or even trilingual education, with the use of the vehicular language clearly defined for each course, but with French and German very much at the forefront within education and Luxembourgish the main language of communication outside the classroom – the latter being picked up rather than taught as there are only few lessons dedicated to Luxembourgish and only in some grades.

Unfortunately, this policy is not very well suited to young people who immigrate to our country at an age when they no longer have time to catch up in languages with their peers who have been educated in our country from the beginning.

### **Objectives**

Our language policy has as its main objective to alleviate the injustices caused by the often poor national language skills of our students as well as facilitating integration into the school and wider community. It is also with this in mind that the IB DP was adopted in our school system and that it perfectly complements the national school offer. A central objective of the Ministry of Education was to address a glaring hole in the national education offer by providing a secondary school degree in English for immigrants not fluent in the official languages as well as interested locals, as the demand for this was high and is still growing rapidly.

### **Implementation and evolution**

The IB DP does not require the learning of a third language, but Luxembourg legislation imposes it on our pupils: "In addition to the two languages referred to in 1) a), the pupil must, in a third language, either have completed a four-year course of study during his or her schooling, or be able to demonstrate competences equivalent to level A2 as determined by the Common Framework of Reference for Languages established by the Council of Europe." So our international students need to choose a third language to be in line with the Grand-Ducal Regulation of 7 December 2010 amending the Grand-Ducal Regulation of 9 May 2008, laying down the procedures for recognising the equivalence of the International Baccalaureate with the Luxembourg secondary school leaving certificate.

In the DP, we offer three language courses at both SL and HL: English and French are compulsory for all the students (English being the main language and Group 1 language, French being the second language and the language offered in Group 2) and students can also opt for German B. When implementing the IB DP at the Athénée de Luxembourg, it was

obvious to choose English as the lingua franca and the first language, as it is the language that the foreign students of our target group master best upon arrival in Luxembourg. As French is one of our three administrative languages, every student who wants to join a class preparing for the IB DP must take an admission test in French, regardless of his or her general average. For students coming from the national system, B level French, even at HL, is not that difficult, but since it is mandatory for our students in order to receive an equivalence with the Luxembourgish leaving certificate, we comply to the requirements. However, for many of our students coming from abroad, mastering French after only a couple of years of teaching is not always easy, but the immersion in a francophone country helps them to catch up and obtain a fair level at the end of their IB DP.

For English A, we offer both HL and SL classes due to the fact that although our students are not all native English speakers, they are students for whom English is their main language of education and in general communication with peers. Therefore, we also opted for the more advanced literature rather than the language and literature course to deliver the IB policy of mother-tongue entitlement.

The situation with German is a bit more complicated. Since we have to offer three languages, it is clear that we are obliged to integrate German into group 6, once more, in order to be in line with the requirements of the Ministry of Education. German B is mostly taken by students joining from the national system and wishing to pursue their university studies in a German-speaking university. They are usually required to take a Goethe test in addition to the DP diploma. Students who joined the international programme earlier might not take German B if they have already fulfilled the four-year requirement/A2 level before the DP.

As far as the valorisation of the mother tongue of our students is concerned, the question is more delicate. On the one hand, this would be impossible for students from over 20 different countries, except perhaps as a self-taught subject, but since we cannot assure to find tutors in all the languages that students might master as their mother tongue, we decided not to pursue this option. Until now, we have never had any problems, as our students have always been well prepared to follow our English A course in the IB DP. Another important fact that needs to be pointed out is the particularity of the national language situation. Due to the fact that Luxembourg has three official languages, we believe it wise to focus on the official languages and on English.

For students joining our international programme in the preliminary years (grades 7 to 9), upon demand from the Ministry, we have included Luxembourgish language classes in the curriculum.

### **Dissemination**

Our language policy is communicated in our leaflets and on our website. Since the language policy of the international classes differs from the national policy in terms of the weighting of the different languages and is mainly aimed at students who have recently arrived in the country, it is important to communicate it in all strategic places accessible to foreigners and in the school environment.

### **Support**

All students on the programme have needed to pass admission tests in English and French to ensure that they have the required levels of proficiency to follow the courses. We also accept students who are close to the demanded level and who we feel have sufficient potential and engagement to catch up in a short period of time, with the right support. For students who still have weaknesses, either with their general language skills or more specific problem areas, free support is offered by the school in all languages and at all levels. This ranges from advanced students teaching their peers, often as part of CAS, to teachers giving remedial lessons in the lunch breaks and after class and one-to-one tuition upon demand and appointment.

The school's strategy to support all teachers in their contribution to the language development of students is ingrained in our school-wide 'projet de développement scolaire' (educational development project) which targets biliteracy and vehicular language implementation. In this context, continuous vocational training workshops were organized last year and are scheduled for next year as well. Then, new reference literature is at teachers' disposition in the school library.

### **Flexibility**

In the event that the linguistic situation of our students changes, we should also adapt our language policy. However, at the moment this is highly unlikely as the current demand is growing exponentially due to constant immigration and the post-Brexit situation. It is conceivable that if the demand arises, other languages could be proposed such as Spanish, Italian or Chinese, as the school offers these choices in the national system. So far, there has been scant interest for such a development among our clientele though.